



EPISODE 2x20: “A Leaf on the Wind”

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Teaser

EXT. MR. UNIVERSE'S MOON – COMPLEX – ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

An expanse of SATELLITE DISHES spread out over the moon surrounds the CENTRAL COMPLEX, which looks like a colossal metallic squid designed by a deranged tinker. OUTLYING FACILITIES—lesser towers, landing pads, supply depots—connect to a massive CENTRAL TOWER by what appear to be MONORAIL LINES.

The central tower bristles with satellite dishes and antennae. Behind and above it: the sparkling blue glow of an ION CLOUD.

From the bird's-eye-view, a very small sleek SHUTTLE takes off from the complex, zooms up towards the camera—

—and past it into the—

EXT. ION CLOUD – CONTINUOUS

The shuttle races through the cloud into a clearing—

—which is far from clear. As far as the eye can see, space is swarming with what looks like half the ALLIANCE FLEET.

As the shuttle passes through, we see the different ships: deadly, powerful-looking WARSHIPS; massive, towering SUPERCRUISERS; small, lethal FIGHTERS, swimming like schools of small fish drifting amongst sharks and killer whales. In short, a massive show of firepower—dozens of vessels—all bearing the flag of the Anglo-Sino Alliance.

The shuttle swings around and lands on an impressive warship, angular and sharp, the Great White at the center of the fleet:

The FLAGSHIP – Commodore Chien's new ship (last seen in 'Moment of Silence').

INT. ALLIANCE FLAGSHIP – BRIDGE

CLOSE ON: A pair of military BOOTS, the left one tapping with impatient energy.

We move up to see a SOLDIER...

...who is female, wearing the purple and blue uniform unique to an Alliance admiral. This is ADMIRAL RINA, middle-aged, a tough veteran, weathered physically and

emotionally by her many years of fighting. And, at the moment, pissed. Very pissed.

The bridge is a bulky, sterile high tech center. A raised command area surveys the bridge from the back. The large bridge window displays the ion cloud in front.

ADMIRAL RINA
Commodore, where is our...
(really doesn't want to say this)
...superior?

COMMODORE CHIEN stands there, unsure how to answer, when—

THE OPERATIVE steps into view, looking at a DATA PAD. He wears his plain black combat uniform, his SWORD strapped to his back.

Admiral Rina visibly tenses. The Operative doesn't look up from his data pad.

OPERATIVE
This isn't your entire fleet, Admiral.

ADMIRAL RINA
(damn right)
No. It isn't.

The Operative finally looks up.

OPERATIVE
Do you have a problem taking orders from me, Admiral?

Chien looks uneasy at this conflict.

ADMIRAL RINA
You pull me from my station, and my ships from their positions. You order every ship in the quadrant to your location with no reason. From a man who has no rank or name? Yes. I have a problem.

CHIEN
(tentatively)
Admiral, with all due respect, we are here because of the will of Parliament.

ADMIRAL RINA
I report to Military Command, as do you, Commodore.

OPERATIVE

And MilCom reports to Parliament. It's a simple food chain. Big fish, little fish. Out here, I am Parliament, and so you fall under me.

(calm, but menacing)

Is that clear?

ADMIRAL RINA

My fleet was on an important mission. These slavers are the biggest threat to the border worlds of the Alliance.

OPERATIVE

(without breaking eye contact with Rina)

Commodore Chien, is that true?

CHIEN

(not pleased to be caught in the middle of this)

Rest assured, Admiral, this is a bigger threat.

ADMIRAL RINA

An unarmed transport?

CHIEN

A fugitive Independent with information that could cripple the Alliance.

ADMIRAL RINA

What information?

CHIEN

We are on a need-to-know...

(gulp)

...sir.

ADMIRAL RINA

As Admiral of this fleet, I damned well need to know!

The Operative steps forward, past Chien, getting up close to Admiral Rina.

OPERATIVE

(whispers)

No, you don't. And neither do I. Just know Captain Reynolds is a threat beyond your wildest imagination.

Beat. The Admiral seems to accept this. Barely.

ADMIRAL RINA

And why will he come here?

OPERATIVE

(smiles)

Because I have left him but this one recourse.

(raises the data pad)

Now. About your missing ships...

ADMIRAL RINA

I ordered two patrol boats to continue their mission against the slaver fleet we were sent to destroy.

OPERATIVE

That was not my order. Contact your ships and have them change—

HELMSMAN

Sir, I'm reading activity in the cloud, but I can't pin it down.

CHIEN

(rushes over to the station)

We'll have a visual soon enough.

OPERATIVE

(into com)

Incoming vessel is a transport, Firefly class, should be heading straight for us. Lock and fire on—

ADMIRAL RINA (into com)

—my command.

(to the Operative)

It is still my fleet. Sir.

The Operative nods in acceptance. They both turn to look out at the ion cloud.

OPERATIVE

(quiet, to himself)

You should have let me see her. We should have done this like men. Not with fire...

HELMSMAN

Sir!

Through the bridge window, there is a swirl in the ion cloud that becomes:

...SERENITY – fully Reaverised in her red paint – breaking through the cloud, heading straight on towards the Alliance fleet. An ant against an empire.

ADMIRAL RINA

Vessel in range, lock on...

OPERATIVE
(admiringly)
Bastard's not even changing course...

EXT. SPACE

As Serenity moves confidently towards certain explosive death—

BLACKOUT



EXT. MIRANDA – DAY

CLOSE ON: Serenity sits where we left her. The too-bright sun shines down on the red Reaverized hull, glaring on it and causing pretty reflections.

<p>CAPTION: 6 HOURS EARLIER</p>
--

CARON (VO, Recording)
There's eight million people here and they all just let
themselves die...

SLOW ZOOM: Past a SKELETAL CORPSE roped to the hull, and up, onto Serenity's roof.

CARON (VO, Recording, cont'd)
(rewinding sounds)
Eight million people here...

GLIDE up close to the CANNON MOUNT ("the Big Stick") sitting defiantly on top of the ship.

CARON (VO, Recording, cont'd)
...and they all just let themselves...

We glide gently past it, and through the skylight, into—

INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – CONTINUOUS

—where River lies flat on her back on the kitchen counter, holding a portable SCREEN above her head.

CLOSE ON: RIVER'S EYE, which reflects the recording of Dr. Caron.

CARON (Recording, cont'd)
Eight million people here and they all just let themselves
die...
(rewinding sound)
all just let themselves—

The overly bright sunlight streams through the skylight onto SIMON and INARA,
sitting at the table, staring at the mugs in front of them.

CARON (Recording, cont'd)
(rewinding sound)
let themselves d—

JAYNE (OS)
Shut it off!

JAYNE and KAYLEE are in the doorway, sweaty, tired, a little dishevelled.

JAYNE
Gorram place is creeped-out enough without you
creepifyin' it further.

River puts the device down, doesn't even look at Jayne.

As Kaylee and Jayne sit at the table, Inara gets up and moves across the room
toward the kitchen area.

INARA
(making small talk)
Is everything all right with the mule? The two of you
look... sweaty.

KAYLEE
We was just workin' off some tension.

Simon's head snaps up and Inara's whips around. Both look horrified.

KAYLEE (cont'd)
No, not... um... Not like that. Oh, no, not like that at all!

Jayne looks a little offended.

KAYLEE (cont'd)
(finishing weakly)
With, um, weights. And stuff.

Now, everyone returns to their own silent thoughts. River lies on the kitchen
counter while Inara makes tea for Jayne and Kaylee. Simon looks at his mug again,

as Kaylee glances around the room. Jayne begins to clean his nails, picking at them with a knife.

The silence is oppressive.

Inara comes back to the table and puts tea in front of Kaylee and Jayne. As she does, her hand passes through a stark BEAM OF LIGHT coming through the skylight. Her brow wrinkles as if she's never seen it before.

INARA

This sunlight... So beautiful. And not a soul to enjoy it.

KAYLEE

How long d'ya think it have taken Shepherd Book to read over all these souls down here?

Jayne looks up, surprisingly serious.

JAYNE

All of his natural life.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE

WASH and BEN HICKS sit; MAL and ZOE stand behind them.

MR. UNIVERSE'S enthusiastic face fills the Wave screen.

MR. UNIVERSE (via Wave)

It's no problem! Bring it on bring it on bring it on bring it on. From here to the eyes and ears of the 'Verse, that's my motto, or it might be if I start having a motto.

Mal takes a sip of his mug of tea.

MAL

We won't be long.

INT. MR. UNIVERSE'S PAD – SAME TIME

Universe sits before his many screens, one of which has Mal on it. Behind him, LENORE – his remarkably lifelike love-bot, sits in a fixed pose on the couch.

PAN AROUND: The Operative and twenty Alliance SOLDIERS stand to the side, out of view of Universe's Wave cameras.

MR. UNIVERSE

You're gonna get caught in that pesky ion cloud again.
Don't let it fool ya. I'm still right here. Just ask Lenore.

Lenore springs to life in sudden robotic movement, and booming pre-programmed voice:

LENORE

(flatly)

Master, what is your dirty, diiiirty desire?

The Operative swings around, startled—only for a second—by the sudden animation of Lenore.

But a second is all that Universe needs. He's wearing a FINGER-TIP MOUSE and he starts moving it frantically, almost like conducting music. A CURSOR on the screen where Mal is matches the movement.

Then a RED LINE appears. It reads "MAKE YOU BURST OUT OF YOUR BLOUSE."

LENORE (cont'd)

(robotic)

Would you like a tickle, snuggle-bear?

MR. UNIVERSE

(still mousing frantically)

Lenore, I'm talking here.

LENORE

(no emotion)

But squishems... I want you so baaaad.

The Operative turns back to Universe and the screen. The red line of text is gone.

MR. UNIVERSE

You can see I'm talking...

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Mal stares down at the screen with Universe's mug on it, and he's currently having a one-sided argument off screen.

MR. UNIVERSE (via Wave, cont'd)

No, I have respect, you— you just need to respect my
process!

(to Mal, grinning)

You shouldn't have had to see that.

ZOE
(under her breath)
No one should.

MAL
Love is the devil.

MR. UNIVERSE (via Wave)
You noticed that too?

MAL
You'll let us know if anyone else comes at you?

MR. UNIVERSE (via Wave)
(grins widely)
You'll be the first.

He starts humming under his breath.

MR. UNIVERSE (via Wave, cont'd)
Tell that Wash chap to stay fruity. Faroooooteeee!

More with the humming.

Mal and Wash look at each other. Wash shrugs.

MAL
("Riiiiight")
Uh-huh.

Mal nods to Ben, who punches a button, and the screen goes blue, cutting Universe off in mid-hum.

BEN
Signal was scrambled all the way. No one traced us.

Mal stands there a moment, confused.

ZOE
Everything daisy, sir?

MAL
Daisy as it can be, what we're 'bout to do.

He takes a long sip of tea.

MAL (cont'd)
Get the crew together. About time for some speechifyin',
I think.

Wash and Zoe share a hint of a smile.

ZOE

Yes, sir.

Zoe leaves the bridge. Wash stands to follow her, humming under his breath. Same song as Universe.

Mal is still troubled by something. It's nagging at him.

Wash mutters a few words of the song as he leaves: it's the Fruity-Oaty Bar theme song.

CLICK.

It falls into place for Mal.

MAL

(to Ben)

Ben, did you record that wave?

BEN

All waves are recorded up to ninety thousa—

MAL

Pull it up. Look for a hidden message. A subliminal something'r other.

BEN

Sublimin—?

MAL

Just do it.

Ben starts punching the keyboard.

INT. SERENITY –FOREDECK HALL – SAME TIME

Zoe's halfway down the hall already.

WASH

Hey.

He comes down the stairs and she comes back to him.

ZOE

Hey.

They hug, a brief moment of personal sanity.

WASH

So we're really gonna broadwave this thing at Uni's?
Like... to everyone?

ZOE

Looks like. Assuming we live that long.

The two stand, faces pressed together, taking warmth and comfort from each other.

WASH

(thinks about it)

We make it out of this, you and me are definitely gonna
make a baby.

ZOE

(quietly)

A whole lot of them.

They kiss.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Ben types frantically. Mal hovers in the background, anxious.

BEN

<Holy goat of secrets>! Mal – I think I got somethin'
here.

MAL

What is it?

BEN

A data stream...

Ben punches a button. The screen lights up with Fruity Oaty Bars.

BEN (cont'd)

It's buried inside this commerci—

MAL

Can you decode it?

BEN

Gimme a sec...

(type, type, type)
Here we go.

The screen fills with a splotchy pixelated IMAGE. Unrecognizable.

Ben continues typing away as the image refines itself, time and time again, becoming:

A BIG BLUE SPHERE, surrounded by LOTS OF RED DOTS of differing sizes, on a black background. The blue sphere is labelled with a sloppy handwritten arrow as "ME" and the red dots have the label "THEM".

BEN
What the...

Mal looks at it, confused. It looks not unlike the image the crew saw of the Reaver swarm around Miranda...

BEN (cont'd)
Looks like a three year old got creative.

MAL
(lightbulb moment)
He was in a rush.

Zoe strides back onto the bridge.

ZOE
Sir?

Mal turns from the image.

ZOE (cont'd)
Everyone's waiting in the galley. Look like a group that
frank could use some inspiring words, sir.

Mal sighs, then stands up straight, and walks out, leaving us looking at Mr. Universe's image, still on-screen.

INT. MR. UNIVERSE'S PAD – SAME TIME

The Operative stands over Mr. Universe, who sits uncomfortably in his chair. Scared even – a side of him we've never seen.

MR. UNIVERSE
Why are you still here? I did what you asked. Just toss
me my thirty coin, and you can wait for Mal on your own
ships!

OPERATIVE

You were supposed to ask him where he was coming from.

MR. UNIVERSE

Or, a sign, on my forehead that says "There's a hundred government tools standing in the room with me." Both of those are options, there's pros and cons...

OPERATIVE

You're probably right.

(to his men)

Destroy every Cortex connection. We won't be showing any dramas from here.

MR. UNIVERSE

My beating heart, you fiends... That was not the deal! If you're gonna shoot 'em outta the sky, why do you gotta trash my world?

The Operative exits frame and the CAMERA PUSHES IN on the despondent Mr. Universe as the men start smashing things around him.

Crashing noises. Sparks fly.

MR. UNIVERSE (cont'd)

Lenore, did you see what—

The Operative's SWORD THRUSTS through his belly. A moment, and the Operative pulls the sword out again, leaving a shocked Mr. Universe gasping his last.

OPERATIVE

Because life is uncertain.

A soldier comes up behind the Operative.

SOLDIER

Sir?

He turns.

SOLDIER (cont'd)

Commodore Chien on the line. MilCom insists on sending an Admiral to oversee the fleet. She wants to meet with you...

OPERATIVE

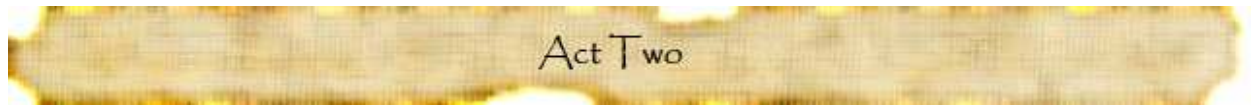
I see.

He takes one last look at the gasping Mr. Universe. Blood trickles to the floor around him.

OPERATIVE (cont'd)
Ready the shuttle.

He looks around the room.

OPERATIVE (cont'd)
Destroy it all.



EXT. SERENITY – DAY

CLOSE ON: One of Serenity's engines, as it FIRES up.

EXT. MIRANDA – CITY – DAY

The Reaverised Serenity takes off. Its thrusters move from the downward position to the horizontal as Serenity sweeps up and away from the dead city.

EXT. SPACE – MIRANDA ORBIT

Serenity comes up and around from the far underside of the planet.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash pilots, Ben co-pilots, and Mal, Inara, and Zoe stand behind them.

BEN
You sure about this, Mal?

MAL
I am.

Swing around to see what they're looking at - the REAVER FLEET approaching. Jagged Reaver ships drift slowly about, slumbering.

BEN (OS)
It seems kind of... risky.

INARA (OS)
If he's there, it's the only way.

Framed by the forward viewport, one of the ships powers up with an ominous red glow, and moves off – hunting.

BACK ON: the crew. No one has much to say as they stare forward.

ZOE
How long 'til...?

Ben pulls his eyes away from the view of the Reaver fleet in front of them and checks a monitor on his console.

BEN
Twenty minutes.

MAL
(nods)
Better get ready for the dance.

Mal leaves the bridge. Inara follows.

WASH
(to Ben)
Dance... Are Reavers really the dancing type?

Uncomfortable silence.

WASH (cont'd)
(almost manic)
Ha ha! It's funny 'cause it's about Reavers... and dancing...
(the reality of it sinks in)
And oh. My. God...

INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – SAME TIME

Simon, Kaylee, and Jayne sit at the table and look out the dining room skylight. Miranda gets smaller as they speed away. River has moved back to the kitchen counter.

JAYNE
All that death... and the best he can come up with is to ride right into more of it. What's that called?

SIMON
(quietly)
Ironic.

JAYNE
Yeah? That a fancified Core word for stupid?

MAL (OS)
Jayne.

Mal stands in the doorway, Inara behind him.

MAL (cont'd)
It's time. Kaylee, you be sure Serenity's ready to rabbit. I
don't want to be still here when we wake them up.

The others stand as Mal and Inara walk across the room. As the pair reaches the
door to the aft hall—

JAYNE
Mal.

Mal turns back, ready for a fight.

JAYNE (cont'd)
Just don't... don't screw up.

Mal smirks, nods, and heads through the doorway.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – MOMENTS LATER

Inara helps Mal get into a SPACE SUIT.

INARA
Mal, it's not too late to run. You don't have to do this. Not
any of it.

She turns to a rack and picks up the helmet.

MAL
It is my firm belief that somebody does.

Mal's face is set.

She leans up and kisses him on the corner of his lip. Sweet, chaste, almost courtly.

He opens his mouth to say something, but she smacks the helmet down over his
head.

MONTAGE (<i>ominous MUSIC throughout</i>):

EXT. SPACE – REAVER FLEET

Serenity slices its way quietly through the Reaver fleet. All around them the Reaver ships hang menacingly, but almost entirely still.

Serenity, despite her corpses, red war paint, scars, and poisonous green vapour trail, seems to stick out among this armada.

Conspicuous among the silent madness.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE

Wash, Zoe, and Ben watch the sea of Reaver ships passing by the bridge window.

EXT. SPACE – REAVER FLEET

Miranda recedes in the background.

INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM

River sits on the counter, one foot bare, as she laces a boot onto the other, her face twisted in intense concentration.

Jayne and Simon sit at the table with a huge array of weapons and ammo in front of them. Jayne preps and inspects each weapon, then hands it to Simon, who DUCT-TAPES it securely to the table.

Jayne pauses and looks up through the window, nervous.

Simon hands him the BOTTLE OF SAKE.

EXT. SPACE – REAVER FLEET

Drifting...

INT. SERENITY – ENGINE ROOM – SAME TIME

Kaylee works frantically in the engine room.

Inara is with her, though without a lot to do. She twists and looks towards the walls of the engine room, as though expecting to hear something.

EXT. SPACE – REAVER FLEET

Serenity continues her drift through the Reaver fleet.

Suddenly another ship—a monstrosity with large lobsteresque PINCERS—fires up, running near her...

END MONTAGE. <i>Stop MUSIC - DEAD SILENCE.</i>

The two ships pace each other.

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE

Zoe watches through the window while Wash and Ben look at various monitors.

ZOE
(whispering)
Sir, are you seeing this?

MAL (via com)
We've been made.

EXT. SERENITY – TOPSIDE – SAME TIME

The Big Stick sits there, a CORPSE IN A SPACE SUIT dangling off it, just hanging there like a rag-doll.

The lobster-ship inching closer and closer.

MAL (cont'd, OS, via com)
How long till we clear the herd?

BEN (via com)
Thirty seconds...

The pincers open and close menacingly.

INT. SERENITY – ENGINE ROOM – SAME TIME

Kaylee works with great focus. Inara stands to one side, watching.

MAL (via com)
("c'mon, c'mon!")
Kaylee...

Kaylee lifts her hands off, as though being timed. She nods to Inara, who punches the wall-com.

INARA (into com)
Ready for full burn when you are, Mal.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – SAME TIME

Jayne and Simon continue their work as Mal's voice comes over the com.

MAL (via com)
Okay. Everybody tense up. This is the part where it gets funny.

River calmly puts on her other shoe.

EXT. SPACE – REAVER FLEET

The pacing Reaver ship starts to UNFOLD mechanically, revealing its underbelly – bristling with SPIKES and GUNS. Other ships have begun to take an interest and are trailing Serenity.

PULL BACK from the Reaver ships and IN TOWARD:

EXT. SERENITY – CONTINUOUS

The corpse hangs there, motionless, facing away from the Reaver ships that move closer and closer...

WASH (via com)
NOW!

THE CORPSE COMES TO LIFE! It's Mal, SWINGING the cannon around and FIRING successive, percussive bursts into the pacing Reaver ship.

The lobster-ship silently EXPLODES, fragmenting into burning bits that spiral into other ships, causing two smaller ones to explode as well.

It is a wonderland of flame and chaos – but it is silent, except in:

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Where Wash, Zoe, and Ben shake from the concussive waves of the nearby explosion. The thrum of the cannon reverberates through the hull.

EXT. SERENITY – TOPSIDE – SAME TIME

Mal swings round to the other ships trailing Serenity, now closing in on her. Seemingly every ship in the Reaver fleet wakes up and turns towards the explosions.

Towards THEM.

Mal fires more shots at the biggest ship he can find, causing a minor flash in on the underbelly of the ship, but does not slow it down.

A PIECE of flaming, exploded ship spins right at his head – he ducks down in the firing shield, strapping himself tighter into the seat.

MAL
Go! **Go now!**

The Reavers have a second, maybe two, to get closer, then—

Serenity's tail LIGHTS up, the swirling green energy playing off Mal's helmet. Serenity streaks away from the Reaver fleet.

ANGLE ON: The entire Reaver fleet. They power up their engines. A few of them fire missiles, cables and spikes ahead of them. Most of them take some time getting up to speed, but some rip out with bursts of fire.

One in particular—let's call it THE HUNTER—is among the sleekest (though stripped-down) and most powerful of the fleet. Two sections of it open up and reveal engines as unfathomable as the Firefly's, whirling and spewing dark red ENERGY... and then it bolts out past the others.

EXT. SPACE – DISTANT ANGLE – SAME TIME

Serenity barrels its way towards the camera, tail-end still glowing brightly.

Not too far behind is the chasing Reaver fleet.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE

Wash sits at his console, cool and calm, hands steady, keeping his eyes on the empty blackness ahead. Zoe stands behind him checking the monitors, while Ben sits in the co-pilots chair, his eyes glued to his monitor.

WASH
We got a head start here but it ain't much.

BEN
(panic is not the word)
We got about fifty, no, sixty ships behind us! All reading
weapons hot.

A klaxon sounds.

ZOE
Missiles coming in...
(into com)
Everybody brace for impact!

EXT. SERENITY – TOPSIDE – SAME TIME

Mal, now strapped in to the seat of the Big Stick, sees TWO STREAKS heading towards him.

He grabs what is clearly a home-made DEVICE: a coffee can, with some wires and other bits sticking out of it. He twists a couple of wires together, and tosses it up. Serenity leaves it miles behind in an instant.

INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – SAME TIME

River lies flat on the kitchen counter. She would be looking up through the skylight at the BRIGHT LIGHT from the exploding Reaver missiles, but her eyes are closed.

RIVER
Boom.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

ANGLE ON: The device.

It starts to glow orange-red with heat, and the two missiles fired go straight for it and EXPLODE.

EXT. SERENITY – TOPSIDE – SAME TIME

The shockwave buffet Mal: if he wasn't strapped in, he'd have been tossed out into the black.

EXT. SPACE –SAME TIME

At least one ship flies into the explosion, and also blows up.

Other ships skirt by, heading after Serenity. The Hunter, gaining on them all, actually BUMPS one ship out the way, and sends it spiralling.

EXT. SERENITY – TOPSIDE – SAME TIME

The Hunter slips past Mal's fire, moving in close.

MAL (into com)
Okay, trouble...

Mal rapidly swings the cannon toward it. He fires two shots - one just misses, the second hits, explodes on the surface. Useless.

WASH (via com)
Mal, get inside!

MAL
Little busy...

The Hunter moves closer still – sidling as it comes – GUN TURRETS opening up.

Mal brings his cannon around to meet it.

ANGLE ON: Mal's cannon sight, trained on the Hunter's turret.

He FIRES.

His shot hits one of the turrets—

—which EXPLODES.

The Hunter returns fire, raking Serenity – some damage, but it misses Mal.

The Hunter gets closer still... enough for Mal to spit-shine its windshield. Through the window, we see SHADOWS of men... Not men.

The Hunter FIRES.

To Mal's left, on Serenity's rear end, there's an EXPLOSION.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

The bridge crew are shaken by the explosion.

INT. SERENITY – ENGINE ROOM – SAME TIME

Coolant STEAM and SPARKS fly about the room. Kaylee rushes around, while Inara stands looking a little helpless.

MAL (via com)
Kaylee! We've been hit!

A valve BURSTS.

KAYLEE
Really!? Hadn't noticed, Cap'n!

EXT. SERENITY – TOPSIDE – SAME TIME

Mal fires two more shots in rapid succession into the Hunter's bridge window. They find their mark, shattering it, and TWO BODIES get sucked out into the black. The Hunter slows, breaking off its pursuit, dropping away behind Serenity.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash is keeping the ship steady, but he's clearly struggling with the controls.

ZOE
What's wrong?

WASH
I don't know.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

Serenity continues its blistering pace, but it seems to be sliding horizontally at an odd angle. Tilting.

Another group of Reaver ships begin to close the gap.

INT. SERENITY - ENGINE ROOM – SAME TIME

Inara looks at a READOUT on the engine room bulkhead.

INARA
The reactor's holding.

She turns to Kaylee, who is busy checking things.

INARA (cont'd)
(worried)
Can we take another hit?

Kaylee doesn't answer, concentrating on something else entirely.

KAYLEE
(pensive)
Adjustor's fried.

INARA
How do you—

KAYLEE
I can smell it.

In a second, she's grabbing a CHAIN and hitting a LEVER, being pulled up to the ceiling of the engine room, where she kicks off a PANEL and wriggles into the CRAWL SPACE above.

KAYLEE
Starboard axials're fused! Get me an Alligator and three 64s!

Inara looks lost.

EXT. SERENITY – TOPSIDE – SAME TIME

Mal takes more pot-shots into the new group of Reaver ships coming up on Serenity.

The Reavers have clearly learned: their ships are spread out, making it more difficult for Mal to hit them.

Serenity is still on a tilt, drifting to one side, and now so much so that it is drifting towards a Reaver ship that has moved up her starboard side.

Mal swings the cannon toward it, lining up a shot.

MAL (into com)
Wash! Can you enlighten me as to why I, and by extension, my ship, are now heading towards the bloodthirsty killer cannibals?!

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE/ENGINE CRAWL SPACE – SAME TIME

MAL (via com, cont'd)
You do realise you'll get eaten too, right?

WASH
(ignoring Mal)
Kaylee, I got deep starboard drift here!

INTERCUT WITH: Kaylee, working in the crawl space.

KAYLEE
Working on it!

WASH
Work faster!

KAYLEE
Fly better!

WASH
Ben! Get down into the avionics bay. See if you can
bypass the axial control matrix.

Ben scrambles out of his seat and down the ladder in the front of the bridge, to the Avionics Bay. Zoe takes his place.

BEN
On it.

ZOE
(dead calm)
They're almost on us. Two hundred... One-eighty...

EXT. SERENITY – TOPSIDE – SAME TIME

Mal fires once, twice... then a benign soft CLICK from the canon - out of ammo.

MAL
(under his breath)
If I didn't know better, I'd say there was a God tryin' to
end me...

And then, as if to prove him right, the Hunter is back, somehow flying without a soul on the bridge. Serenity is practically underneath it now, and it forms a SHADOW over Mal as he looks up.

MAL (cont'd, into com)
I'm coming in!

He UNCLIPS his straps, and starts to climb out of the cannon.

A hatch OPENS on the bottom of the Hunter, directly above Serenity and Mal.

Three METAL DISCS the size of landmines fly out, attached to CABLES. They lock on Serenity's hull with a silent clunk-clunk-clunk, in front of Mal.

Mal continues towards the topside airlock hatch, but before he can make it, three Reavers in black SPACE SUITS slide down the cables between the two ships, barring Mal's way.

All three Reavers carry mean-looking blades and even their suits are creepy: a hodgepodge of items stolen or ripped – physically ripped - off, still caked with blood and bits. Crude metal claws are duct-taped to their knuckles and knees.

The three Reavers face Mal, ready to strike.



EXT. SERENITY – TOPSIDE - CONTINUOUS

The Hunter backs off a bit, as the cables snap free at the other end.

Mal scrambles toward the front of Serenity, but the closest Reaver takes his free-floating cable, and whips it around Mal, pulling him back and off his feet.

Mal barely manages to grab the cannon barrel, but it continues to arc around—

Swinging him past the Reaver—

Who gets in close and swipes at him with a blade.

Mal goes around once more as the cannon makes a full revolution, and this time he's ready.

Holding onto the cannon, he brings both feet, and KICKS the Reaver in the helmet—

Sending him flying into nothing, as Mal swings back the opposite way from the force of it.

The remaining two Reavers converge.

Mal manages to brace himself well enough to grab the hand of the smaller Reaver, stop his blade from piercing his own suit, but the other one swipes and CUTS a deep gash in the chest—

Mal looks down to see his inner lining is still intact—he’s not venting oxygen yet. He twists the hand of the small Reaver, and shoves the blade into the stomach of the bigger one.

Air rushes out and the Reaver thrashes in agony and sudden frozen death.

The surviving Reaver lunges at Mal.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

WASH
I still can’t steer us!

ZOE (into com)
Kaylee, we need some control back up here!

Looks at her radar display.

ZOE (cont’d)
O zhei shi suo you cuo wu he fei chang huai <Oh this is
all wrong and is extremely bad>.
(into com)
Captain, we’re heading near light meteoric debris.

MAL (via com)
Go around it!

WASH (into com)
Can’t!

ZOE (into com)
At this speed, a grain of sand’ll kill you!

EXT. SERENITY – TOPSIDE – SAME TIME

Mal grapples with the last of the Reavers, the blade between them.

MAL
That’s nice.

The Reaver gets in close, smearing its horrible, bloody face all over its breath-fogged faceplate, baring sharpened teeth at Mal. It’s stronger than he is, and begins to TWIST the blade back at Mal.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Down in the AVIONICS BAY, at the front of the bridge, Ben struggles with fistfuls of WIRES.

He finishes plugging a bunch of them into the avionics machinery.

BEN

Try it now!

Out on the bridge, Wash flips some controls—

—and half-a-dozen screens around him go dead.

WASH

BEN!!

Ben starts frantically pulling the wires out again.

BEN

Which wires where!?

Wash looks down into the bay. Ben holds up the two big wires.

WASH

(pointing)

No, no! No! This one goes there, that one goes there!

Zoe looks at her screen.

ZOE

Couple thousand miles...

WASH (into com)

Kaylee!

INT. SERENITY - ENGINE CRAWL SPACE – SAME TIME

Kaylee continues to work with fierce concentration. A coupling sparks in her face.

She drops a tool and it clatters far below.

KAYLEE

Gao wan <Testicle>!

EXT. SERENITY – TOPSIDE – SAME TIME

Mal is up against the cannon, grappling with the Reaver as it pushes the blade closer.

Can't keep this guy off much longer...

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

ANGLE ON: Radar display, showing a large patch of very small dots in the top half of the screen – it shifts down.

PULL BACK to see Wash and Zoe looking at the radar display.

They share a worried look and turn to Ben, who's pulling himself out of the avionics bay. He looks out the bridge window, scared.

A long slow ZOOM past the bridge crew, through the bridge window, and out into...

EXT. SPACE – CONTINUOUS

Speed forward to see what looks like a small DUST CLOUD approaching.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

ZOE (into com)
Find cover, sir! NOW!

EXT. SERENITY – TOPSIDE – SAME TIME

Mal stops pushing against the Reaver and drops to the roof just behind the cannon platform.

The Reaver brings back his arm for the death blow – and a tiny, silent PUFF hits it.

He looks ahead and suddenly his helmet and suit are dotted with tiny HOLES, the glass cracking and exploding out as tiny pebbles go through him at four times the speed of a bullet.

Mal stays down, the meteor dust impacting harmlessly on the cannon's platform as the Reaver floats off, all dead.



INT. SERENITY – ENGINE CRAWL SPACE – SAME TIME

Kaylee finishes the fix: fiber-optic WIRES glow with new life.

KAYLEE (into com)
We're up!

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash pulls up. The dust cloud disappears below the bridge window.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

Serenity pulls up and over the dust field.

Back beyond Serenity, the Reaver armada still gives chase – an angry swarm - not gaining, but not going away either.

EXT. SERENITY – TOPSIDE – SAME TIME

Mal remains clinging on top of the ship, still behind the cannon.

Silence.

MAL
Hello...?

ZOE (via com)
We're clear, Mal.

MAL
Are you very, very sure?

ZOE (via com)
Make your move, sir.

Mal crawls out from behind the cannon. He scrambles over to the hatch, yanks it open, and plunges in head first.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

MAL (via com)
I'm in.

The bridge crew visibly relax.

Wash taps a couple of buttons and takes his hands off his controls. Ben settles into the co-pilot's seat. Zoe glances at both consoles over their shoulders.

ZOE
How much breathing room have we got?

WASH
Enough for now.

Ben stares at the screens.

BEN
They're never giving up, are they?

ZOE
That's the idea...

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

The Reavers pursue Serenity. Serenity has a lead—not much, but for now the Reavers can't close the gap.

EXT. SPACE – LATER

Serenity races toward the sparkling blue ion cloud... behind her:

The chasing Reaver fleet.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE

The ion cloud FILLS the view through the bridge window.

All of the crew are on the bridge, staring out at it. River stands right up against the bridge window, a hand pressed on the glass.

MAL
Time 'til—?

WASH
Three minutes 'til we pass through the cloud.

BEN
I'm not seeing anything beyond it on sensors.

MAL
Well, that's the idea...
(turns)
S'gonna get prickly soon. Kaylee, engine room. Rest of
you, go back and strap in.

EXT. MR. UNIVERSE'S MOON

In close orbit around the moon is the massive Alliance fleet.

Fifty plus ships, all high-tech firepower: supercruisers, towering like floating cities; deadly, powerful warships; sleek, lethal fighters swim in-between the bigger ships like shoals of small fish in a reef.

Move on to one of the ships at the centre of it all:

INT. ALLIANCE FLAGSHIP – BRIDGE

The Operative, Chien, and Admiral Rina stand in conversation on the busy bridge.

OPERATIVE

(to Rina)

That was not my order. Contact your ships and have them change—

HELMSMAN

Sir, I'm reading activity in the cloud, but I can't pin it down.

CHIEN

(rushes over to the station)

We'll have a visual soon enough.

OPERATIVE

(into com)

Incoming vessel is a transport, Firefly class, should be heading straight for us. Lock and fire on—

ADMIRAL RINA (into com)

—my command.

(to the Operative)

It is still my fleet. Sir.

The Operative nods in acceptance. They both turn to look out at the ion cloud.

OPERATIVE

(quiet, to himself)

You should have let me see her. We should have done this like men. Not with fire...

HELMSMAN

Sir!

Through the bridge window, there is a swirl in the ion cloud that becomes:

...Serenity – fully Reaverised in her red paint – breaking through the cloud, heading straight on towards the Alliance fleet. An ant against an empire.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Mal, Wash, Ben, and Zoe take in the sight of the massive Alliance fleet – it's a bit of a shock.

ZOE
Wo de mah. There's an army here.

BEN
You sure about this, Mal?

MAL
(frowns)
You already asked me that.

BEN
Yeah, but you could always, y'know, change your mind...
(“gulp”, small)
Please.

INT. SERENITY – ENGINE ROOM – SAME TIME

Kaylee looks round her engine room – everything, more or less, in pristine working condition. Nothing broken... yet.

INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – SAME TIME

Inara straps River into a chair, then herself. Then waits.

Simon and Jayne stand over the table. They nervously give the weapons a final check and make sure they're secure.

Jayne takes a swig from the sake bottle.

INT. ALLIANCE FLAGSHIP – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Through the bridge window – Serenity races straight toward them.

ADMIRAL RINA
Vessel in range, lock on...

OPERATIVE
(admiringly)
Bastard's not even changing course...

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

The Alliance Fleet readies itself, weapons emerging and the ships moving themselves to better firing positions.

Serenity comes closer, closer...

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

MAL
How—

WASH AND BEN
Any minute.

EXT. SPACE

As the Alliance Fleet readies itself for a duckshoot, suddenly—

—THE ARMADA OF REAVER SHIPS burst through the ion cloud, hard on Serenity's tail. And straight at the Alliance fleet.

INT. ALLIANCE FLAGSHIP – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Everybody on the bridge goes goggle-eyed.

CHIEN
Shen jing bing <Lunatic>!

OPERATIVE
That's not good...

CHIEN
Son of a BITCH!

ADMIRAL RINA
(stunned)
Reavers... Wha—

HELMSMAN
(freaking)
Sir!?

OPERATIVE
(coming to his senses)
Target the Reavers.
(into com, losing his famous cool)
Target the Reavers! Target everyone! Somebody FIRE!

Nobody moves, frozen, too stunned and scared.

ADMIRAL RINA
(taking charge, grabs the com)
Tactical! Evasive theta! All ships, all batteries, open fire!
Helm, break orbit! Don't let them flank us!

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

The Alliance fleet scrabbles to meet the new threat, as the Reavers close in, on a collision course – Serenity caught between the two.

The Alliance fleet opens FIRE, missiles streaking from dozens of launchers towards the ever-closing Reaver fleet.

Serenity lists hard to port, dropping until she's almost upside down.

The Alliance missiles miss Serenity and tag a few Reaver ships, though they don't slow down.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Through the bridge window: The Alliance fleet, upside down. Missiles fly past.

Wash pilots with intense concentration.

MAL
We're too close for them to arm—

ZOE
This is gonna be very tight—

BEN
(tilts his head in wonder)
Hey! We're upside down.

WASH
(to himself)
I am a leaf on the wind, watch how I soar.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

A lot happens now.

Serenity slips right under Chien's flagship and bobs and weaves between dozens more vessels. A couple of them fire, but hit only their own ships.

The Reaver force hits the Alliance head on – and several ships do just that, smashing into bigger ships *kamikaze*-style. Explosions everywhere.

The Alliance fleet has been forced to scatter, but they now begin to regroup, bringing their guns to bear on the Reaver ships...

A Reaver ship fires its HARPOON into an Alliance ship, spinning it around.

The air war has begun.

It's a frenzied, ballistic orgy of destruction – ships, and parts of ships, flying everywhere.

ANGLE ON: SERENITY

She nearly makes it all the way through the Alliance Fleet to Universe's moon before a barrelling chunk of debris (twice Serenity's size) forces them to come about and dive back into the fray.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Mal looks out at the chaos, which is mostly Reavers tearing into the Alliance.

MAL

Chickens come home to roost...

They are suddenly JOLTED by a glancing blow. Everybody desperately holds on as Wash struggles to maintain control.

BEN

(panicky)

WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT!?!

WASH

(also panicky)

It's okay! I am a leaf on the wind!

MAL

(very panicky)

What does that mean!?

INT. MR. UNIVERSE'S PAD – SAME TIME

The place is a shambles – screens destroyed and equipment smashed up.

ANGLE ON: Mr. Universe's chair, empty and covered in blood.

The blood trails off to the side, which we follow across the floor to the bottom of the bed and Lenore's legs.

Mr. Universe lies dead – draped across Lenore's lap, his eyes still open.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

Serenity barrels through the battle – suddenly finding herself being BOXED IN by three big Alliance supercruisers.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash and Mal see it coming...

	MAL
No, no—	
	WASH
—Yes—	
	MAL
— <u>No</u> —	
	WASH
— <u>Yes</u> —	

Wash twists the controls and—

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

—Serenity slips between and past two of the closing Supercruisers, who collide together with a slow crushing fiery CRASH.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – SAME TIME

Boxes and crates slide everywhere.

The damaged HOVER-MULE snaps free of one, than another, of its overhead moorings, swinging madly like a pendulum by its secured end.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

The battle between Reavers and the Alliance continues.

ANGLE ON: A REAVER SHIP has piggy backed onto an Alliance ship, spindly mechanical claws tearing strips out of the ship's hull – atmo and men are sucked out into the vacuum of space.

INT. ALLIANCE SHIP – SAME TIME

A short frantic view inside the Alliance ship: Alliance soldiers being cut down, dragged off, skinned, raped—

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

Serenity weaves her way past the carnage and tries again to make her way down toward the tiny moon.

Four Alliance FIGHTERS twist through the chaos in pursuit.

The Alliance fighters blast two small Reaver ships and continue to fire at Serenity, who dodges the shots through the debris.

INT. ALLIANCE FLAGSHIP – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

The bridge is in chaos. Alarms sound, crew shout orders to each other, smoke pours out of smashed consoles.

In the middle of it: Admiral Rina and Commodore Chien.

CHIEN (into com)
Engineering report!

ADMIRAL RINA
Helm! Bring us about two-three-eight mark five!
(to a crewman)
Order the Dortmunder to—

CREWMAN
Sir! The Dortmunder is gone!

ADMIRAL RINA
Well, order some OTHER ship to take out that *da huai dan*
<big bastard> Reaver ship!

CHIEN
Admiral! I'm not getting any response from Engineering!
Permission to—

ADMIRAL RINA
—leave the bridge, and sort it out. It's your ship,
Commodore. Keep her flying.

Chien nods and sets off, taking two crewmen with him.

On the far side of the bridge: The Operative stands at one of the consoles, looking at a screen, holding a communications headset to his ear.

ANGLE ON: The console screen. The view from one of the fighters pursuing Serenity. Even in this warzone he hasn't lost his single-minded focus.

PILOT (via com)
The fugitives are heading towards the surface—

OPERATIVE (into com)
Lock missiles—

ADMIRAL RINA (OS)
What the hell are you doing?!

Rina pulls the Operative roughly away from his console, and SLAMS him against the bulkhead.

ADMIRAL RINA (cont'd)
We are being cut to pieces because of YOU! Help me save
this fleet, damn you!

OPERATIVE
Serenity—

He sees something that stops him.

ANGLE THROUGH THE BRIDGE WINDOW: A Reaver craft on a suicide run straight towards the bridge.

The Operative blinks once, grabs Rina by the arm and quickly pulls them both into a side corridor.

The Reaver craft EXPLODES through the window, filling the bridge space as everything on the bridge is sucked out.

INT. ALLIANCE FLAGSHIP – CORRIDOR – SAME TIME

The Operative and the Admiral are sucked violently BACK towards the bridge but the emergency blast doors SLAM SHUT, cutting them off from the depressurising chaos.

They slam backwards against the blast doors and fall painfully to the floor.

INT. ALLIANCE FLAGSHIP – ENGINEERING CORRIDOR – SAME TIME

Chien and the two crewmen are making their way along the narrow access corridor.

They hear a distant rumble, and share an apprehensive look.

CHIEN

Come on. We need to get a sit rep.

INT. ALLIANCE FLAGSHIP – CORRIDOR – SAME TIME

An eerie quiet beat.

Admiral Rina is the first one up. She stands and turns to put her ear to the blast door, trying to listen.

Nothing. She closes her eyes.

OPERATIVE

(picking himself up)

Admiral...

She cuts him off with a look, as she goes to a wall-mounted communications control, pressing two buttons.

As she speaks, her voice is heard over the ships PA.

ADMIRAL (into wall com)

(calm)

This is Admiral Rina. Abandon ship, Abandon ship. All crew to their escape decks. Abandon ship...

(flat)

That is all.

She clicks the wall com off and takes a deep breath. She turns to the Operative, tensing. The Operative dusts himself off and looks back at her.

OPERATIVE

(indicating)

Escape deck is this way.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

Serenity continues her way through carnage. It's impossible to tell who is winning.

The four Alliance fighters doggedly follow Serenity, twisting and spinning around to keep her in their sights.

Something COLLIDES with one of the fighters, destroying it instantly. The other three maintain the chase.

Over a static-torn communications channel:

PILOT (via com, VO)
Sir? Permission to fire?

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

ZOE
They're right behind, missiles hot...

WASH
Can't outrun them...

MAL
Well... go faster!

WASH
Faster!?

MAL
Faster.

WASH
Yeah. Thanks.

Ben is frantically working buttons at his console.

BEN
Hold on...

ZOE
(looking over his shoulder)
Ben, what are you doing?

BEN
Saving our skins.

EXT. SERENITY – SAME TIME

The SHUTTLE on the port side (not Inara's, the other one) starts to move out on its docking rack...

It disengages, FLYING BACK off the ship like an ejector seat – tumbling and spinning wildly.

ANGLE ON: The pursuing Alliance fighters, a little behind Serenity.

INT. LEAD ALLIANCE FIGHTER COCKPIT – SAME TIME

We see from the POV of the pilot – clouds rushing at us. Serenity weaving.

The pilot, surrounded by a zillion flashing buttons, takes aim.

PILOT (via com, VO)
No response from command. Firing miss—

And the spinning shuttle WHIPS at us, and smashes everything to blackness.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

The resulting explosive wreckage catches the other two fighters as they try to break away. They tumble away into the chaos of the battle.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Mal is more than a little stunned. Even Wash doesn't have anything to say.

Then:

MAL
(to Ben)
You're paying for that.

Wash pulls the controls and—

EXT. SPACE – ABOVE MR. UNIVERSE'S MOON – SAME TIME

Serenity pulls up and around, corkscrewing down toward the moon's surface, the metallic expanse of Mr. Universe's complex sprawling below them.

A moment after Serenity passes through the frame—

—so does the Reaver Hunter.

Act Four

EXT. SPACE

The battle rages on...

ANGLE ON: THE ALLIANCE FLAGSHIP. It's in real trouble, listing badly and going down in flames—

INT. ALLIANCE FLAGSHIP – ESCAPE DECK – SAME TIME

The vessel shakes badly. Heavily damaged, she's on her way out.

The Operative stands in a smoky hall, one wall lined with man-high HATCHES labelled "LIFEBOAT". Further down the line of hatches, Chien and Rina organize the crew's escape from the stricken ship.

The Operative walks calmly through the chaos to a door marked "DART." Below that: "Authorized Personnel Only." The Operative puts his thumb to a panel, and the door slides up to reveal a standing, almost form-fitting one-man cockpit.

He turns to look at Chien and Rina, and they in turn look at each other. An unspoken moment passes.

ADMIRAL RINA

Operative or not, I will see that you hang for this.

OPERATIVE

If that message reaches the surface, we all hang.

CHIEN

(to Rina)

He's right, sir. We should salvage what we can of this disaster.

(to the Operative)

Go.

The Operative nods to the both of them and then drops himself into the Dart, pulling the release lever. The doors close around him, locking him into the coffin-like vessel.

EXT. ALLIANCE FLAGSHIP – SAME TIME

The Operative's Dart—tiny, black, sleek—disengages from the Flagship and bullets down to the surface.

INT. OPERATIVE'S ESCAPE DART – SAME TIME

The Operative struggles against the G-forces.

EXT. ALLIANCE FLAGSHIP – SAME TIME

Many, many small explosions pop silently across the Flagship, one catching a LIFEBOAT as it tries to disengage.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash is a picture of calm, his eyes set on the bridge window.

Ben, Mal, and Zoe also look through the bridge window as the metallic jumble of Mr. Universe's complex sprawls below them.

WASH

Entering atmo in thirty seconds. It's going to get a little bumpy.

MAL

"Going" to get bumpy!?

EXT. MR. UNIVERSE'S MOON

Serenity enters the atmosphere of Mr. Universe's moon, evident by the fiery red heat on her nose.

A moment after Serenity blows through frame, so does the Hunter.

It fires an ELECTRONIC PULSE at Serenity from a pod on its wing tip.

Serenity banks hard to starboard. Missed.

Fires again.

Again it misses, as Serenity dives.

The Hunter does not give up. She roars down, diving with Serenity toward the ground, firing the pulse as it goes—

—and finds Serenity's engine – SPARKS fly.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

The sound of things starting to shut down...

WASH
We're fried! I got no control!

ZOE
EMP.

MAL (into com)
Everybody get yourselves strapped into something.
(to Ben)
Ben, I need you to—

But Ben is frozen: staring at the forward viewport, and the ground rushing crazily toward them.

MAL (cont'd)
BEN!

Ben snaps out of it just long enough for Mal to see that he's of no use here.

MAL (cont'd)
Get back with the others!

Mal practically yanks Ben out of the co-pilot's seat and pushes him toward the door. The ship lurches as Mal throws himself in the co-pilot's chair and Zoe grabs the back of it to keep from falling.

INT. SERENITY – ENGINE ROOM – SAME TIME

Sparks and arcs of electricity are everywhere—

Kaylee jumps back as she is electrocuted, hitting the floor with a THUD.

Simon runs in—

SIMON
Kaylee!

—and pulls her out by her collar, slamming the door shut on the erupting flames.

EXT. MR. UNIVERSE'S MOON – SAME TIME

Serenity starts to tumble in the air...

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

MAL
Where's the backup? Where's the backup?

He and Wash frantically flip switches—

INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – SAME TIME

Ben's buckling himself in with River, Jayne, and Inara when Simon stumbles in, half-carrying, half-walking a very woozy Kaylee, struggling to remain upright as the ship moves violently beneath them.

Inara unbuckles immediately and moves to help Simon.

JAYNE
Y'all're gonna be squishified! Get gorram harnessed!

But Jayne undoes his own harness, stands, and helps them settle Kaylee into the seat he just vacated. Simon straps a dazed Kaylee in.

Jayne practically SHOVES Inara back into her seat, then grabs Simon—still fussing over Kaylee—and dumps him in one of the seats, pulling down for the harness for him.

Jayne, now the only one standing, starts checking everybody else:

JAYNE
Check! Check! Che—

The room starts to spin violently. Jayne is thrown hard into the ceiling.

EXT. MR. UNIVERSE'S MOON – SAME TIME

From the ground, we see Serenity begin a slow spin.

INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – SAME TIME

Jayne is tossed across the dining room.

KAYLEE
Jayne!

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash struggles to try and gain control—

EXT. MR. UNIVERSE'S MOON – SAME TIME

Serenity spins faster and faster, tilting down toward the ground—

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash is reaching for a switch — being pulled out of reach by the G's.

EXT. MR. UNIVERSE'S MOON – SAME TIME

Serenity's spin is but a blur now—

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash stretches, strains, yearns for that damned switch...

Got it!

EXT. MR. UNIVERSE'S MOON – SAME TIME

ANGLE ON: SERENITY'S THRUSTERS, which kick into life—

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash desperately pulls on the controls—

EXT. MR. UNIVERSE'S MOON – SAME TIME

—bringing Serenity out of her spin and straightening her up.

INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – SAME TIME

Jayne scrambles up from off the floor, gets into one of the harness chairs.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

The ship whirs to a semblance of life...

The bridge crew check the readouts.

EXT. MR. UNIVERSE'S COMPLEX – LANDING STRIP – SAME TIME – ESTABLISHING

A long strip ending in a sort of hanger built into the base of one of Mr. Universe's outlying towers.

Serenity is high above it, trying hard to stay pointed in one direction.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

ZOE

Backup reads at twenty percent...

(to Wash)

You have to get us down. Now.

WASH

I'm gonna have to glide her in!

MAL

Can you do that?

ZOE

Of course my mister can.

Wash struggles with the controls.

WASH

Long as that landing strip is made of fluffy pillows...

EXT. MR. UNIVERSE'S COMPLEX – LANDING STRIP – SAME TIME

Serenity arcs toward the landing strip uncomfortably fast.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash fights the yoke with extreme concentration. Mal and Zoe look on nervously, unable to help—

INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – SAME TIME

The rest are strapped, eyes closed, waiting for it to end—

EXT. MR. UNIVERSE’S COMPLEX – LANDING STRIP – SAME TIME

Serenity HITS the ground, moving forward in what would be a perfect 747 landing, if, like a 747, this ship had wheels.

As it is, it’s insanely jolting – the landing gear folds and snaps under the weight. SPARKS fly, along with the SCREAM of metal-against-metal friction.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Everybody is almost thrown out of the seats—

INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – SAME TIME

—as are those in the back—

EXT. MR. UNIVERSE’S COMPLEX – LANDING STRIP – SAME TIME

—the ship keeps going, going, sliding on her hull, sparks showering—

INT. MR. UNIVERSE’S COMPLEX – HANGER – CONTINUOUS

—now she’s inside the hangar, heading towards the rear, slowing, fishtailing—

A standing beam SHEARS off of the portside thruster, sending Serenity spinning about a full one-eighty—

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

The team is badly shaken—

INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – SAME TIME

—as are the rest—

INT. MR. UNIVERSE'S COMPLEX – HANGER – SAME TIME

—Serenity continues backwards, goes beyond the landing strip and THUMPS and CRASHES down into the lower pedestrian area, finally stopping.

The nose and the bridge stick out back towards the runway, the body of the ship hidden.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

The bridge is bathed in the ruddy glow of RED EMERGENCY LIGHTS.

A moment of quiet.

Zoe breathes.

Mal wipes his forehead.

Wash grins.

WASH

I am a leaf on the wind. Watch—

A massive harpoon CRASHES through the windshield and IMPALES him in his chair. It's as thick around as a telephone pole.

Wash has time to open his mouth in surprise before he is dead.

BLACKOUT